

In the Claims:

Please amend claims the claims as follows

45. (Once amended) A method for enhancing the transformation ability and the viability of a bacterium, said method comprising increasing the fatty acid content of the membrane of said bacterium, wherein said bacterium, after increasing its fatty acid content, exhibits an enhanced transformation ability and enhanced viability after storage at a temperature of from about +4°C to about -80°C, relative to the transformation ability and viability exhibited by said bacterium prior to increasing its [the] fatty acid content.

46. (Once amended) A method for enhancing the transformation ability and the viability of bacteria, said method comprising increasing the fatty acid content of the membrane of said bacteria, wherein said bacteria, after increasing their fatty acid content, exhibit an enhanced transformation ability and enhanced viability after storage at a temperature of from about +4°C to about -80°C, relative to the transformation ability and viability exhibited by said bacteria prior to increasing their [the] fatty acid content.

47. (Once amended) The method of claim 46, wherein said bacteria exhibit said enhanced transformation ability and said enhanced viability after storage at temperatures of from about +4°C to about -20°C [-80°C]

1 2 50. (Once amended) ~~The~~ method of claim 48, wherein said enhancing expression comprises increasing the copy number of said one or more genes, wherein said one or more genes are comprised by one or more vectors.

52. (Once amended) The method of claim 51, wherein said bacteria are of the genus *Escherichia*.

53. (Once amended) The method of claim 52, wherein said bacteria are the species *Escherichia coli*.

58. (Once amended) A method for enhancing the transformation ability [viability] of a bacterium [after storage at temperatures of from about +4°C to about -80°C], said method comprising increasing the fatty acid content of the membrane of said bacterium, wherein [after said storage,] said bacterium, after increasing its fatty acid content, exhibits an enhanced transformation ability after storage at a temperature of from about +4°C to about -20°C, [viability] relative to the transformation ability [viability] exhibited by said bacterium prior to [said] increasing its [the] fatty acid content.

59. (Once amended) A method for enhancing the transformation ability [viability] of bacteria [after storage at temperatures of from about +4°C to about -80°C], said method comprising increasing the fatty acid content of the membrane of said bacteria, wherein [after said storage] said bacteria, after increasing their fatty acid content, exhibit an enhanced transformation ability after

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storage at a temperature of from about +4°C to about -20°C, [viability] relative to the transformation ability [viability] exhibited by said bacteria prior to increasing their [the] fatty acid content.

62. (Once amended) The method of claim 60, wherein said enhancing expression comprises increasing the copy number of said one or more genes, wherein said one or more genes are comprised by one or more vectors.

64. (Once amended) The method of claim 63, wherein said bacteria are of the genus *Escherichia*.

65. (Once amended) The method of claim 64, wherein said bacteria are the species *Escherichia coli*.

Add new claims 70 and 71.

--70. The method of claim 47, wherein said bacteria exhibit ~~enhanced~~ transformation ability and enhanced viability after storage at about -20°C.

71. The method of claim 59, wherein said bacteria exhibit said ~~enhanced~~ transformation ability after storage at about -20°C.--